THE EAST RIVER CATASTROPHE

Words cannot portray adequately the horror and the pathos of the frightful catastrophe in the East river, near New York, yesterday, when hundreds of lives were lost by a fire on a steamer crowded with excursionists. It is inexpressibly sad that many of those who perished were children, who had left the great city for a day of innocent recreation. Their outing was not for a day, but for eternity. Death came to some of them in that terrible form—death by the flames. It was a heartbreaking tragedy—one which is so overwhelming that even a vast community like New York is stunned by it.

Less than six months ago on December 30, 1903, the country was shocked by the Iroquoise Theatre disaster in Chicago, when 591 persons were killed in a fire panic. Many children perished in this catastrophe. In the mad rush of the frenzied audience for the exits from the theatre to the street, the little ones were knocked down and trampled upon by the panic stricken crowd. A few were burned to death, but the majority of those who were killed were trodden under foot and suffocated. In yesterday's disaster there was an uncontrollable panic as soon as it became apparent that the vessel was on fire. Many persons were crushed to death or forced overboard by the stampede of passengers to that part of the steamer to which the flames had not extended.

The inquiry into the Chicago catastrophe revealed the fact that the theatre was not equipped with all the appliances which the law prescribes for the protection of persons who attend places of public amusement. The result was that the Chicago authorities ordered a stringent enforcement of the law, and a number of theatres in that city were closed until they had complied with the regulations. In other cities similar action was taken for the protection of theatre goers.

A searching investigation into the circumstances surrounding the disaster near New York yesterday will probably be the outcome of the fearful loss of life. It remains to be seen whether the people of the metropolis are afforded the proper degree of protection from fire and other perils on excursion steamers. In view of the fact that few accidents occur the presumption is that this protection is not lacking. Every effort should be made by steamship companies to insure as far as possible the safety of passengers and excursionists. The steamer which was burned yesterday had a carrying capacity of 2,500 passengers. It is estimated that there were not more than 1,000 persons aboard when the catastrophe occurred. Evidently the vessel was not overcrowded. It does not appear, however, that the life preservers were accessible—at least, in the case of the children. In the excursion boats in New York harbor, it is stated the life preservers are lashed to the ceilings over the decks. Only an adult, it would seem, can get at them. That the vessel which burned yesterday was in as good condition as the law requires is inferred from the statement of officials of the United States Steamboat Inspection Bureau. The boat was inspected on May 5 and was certified to be in proper shape. Her captain was an experienced man with a record of long service.

It may be that every reasonable precaution had been taken against fire and every other danger and that the catastrophe was unavoidable. Whatever the facts may be, however, the New York authorities should probe the matter to the bottom, in order that the responsibility may be placed where it belongs, as well as for the protection of the public against such disasters in the future. It is some satisfaction, at least, despite the frightful loss of life, to know that heroic efforts were made to save the lives of helpless children and women. Such heroism was to be expected from Americans.—Baltimore Sun.

From "One Woman's Chat."

Boston Daily Advertiser.]

The other day I had occasion to visit the rooms of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals. Quantities of May flowers greeted me on every side. The window-sills, the desks and the tables were laden with the exquisite blossoms, and the air was deliciously sweet. Just opposite the door, on the floor in the hallway, stands a large painting of the scene in Longfellow's "Bell of Atri," depicting the faithful old white horse whose working days are over, and now is a highway tramp, tugging at the briery vines which clamber up the rope that rings the bell of justice, summoning the town to witness the shame.

All day long inside this office the bell is ringing for justice. The friends of the dumb animals are among the women, and scarcely a day passes that some woman does not hurry to headquarters bent on a mission of mercy.

A TANTALIZING FISH.

The Ways of the Salmon Are Beyond Finding Out.

Who knows the way of the eagle in the air or of the salmon in the sea? Of all fish the most tantalizing, he has been the life study of thousands of men. Yet how little any one really knows about him, and how conflicting is the testimony as to what is known! If you want to get the idea that there is no such thing as abstract truth, you can form that opinion quickly by sitting in front of the fireplace in a fishing club some evening when the most experienced members are present and feel like talking. There is scarcely any proposition connected with the life history of this fish upon which any two men of forty or fifty years' experience in salmon fishing will agree. The biography of the fish is filled with puzzling blanks. You catch a glimpse of him in his infancy. He mysteriously disappears, returns during adolescence and then is gone again until, on his third appearance, the infant has grown to be fully mature. Who would think the childish smolt of a few ounces that slips quietly down river in the early spring could come back the same summer in the pride of youth as a three or four pound grilse? And the next time he goes upon what meat doth he feed that he jumps to maturity and ten pounds weight? What ports does he visit while he is off on his deep sea cruise? Where does he keep the chart by which, after his far away wanderings, he unerringly returns to his birthplace? And why do many grilse come to some rivers and comparatively few or none to others? In Miramichi waters there are in August ten grilse to every full grown salmon. In the Tobique there are scarcely any grilse at all.—From "The Trout of the Nepisiguit," by Frederic Irland, in Scribner's.

GARTER SUPERSTITIONS.

Here are a few garter superstitions that still survive:

Gold garter buckles are "lucky" and silver ones the reverse.

The girl who wears her garters below the knee will early lose her beauty.

To put on the left garter before the right on dressing in the morning will bring bad luck all day.

The marriage of a bride who wears any but white garters on her wedding day will have an unhappy ending.

The luckiest colors for garters are white, blue and black. The wearer of yellow garters will lose a friend within a year.

If a garter breaks in church the wearer's marriage will be happy, but if the accident happens at a dance it is a sign that the wearer's sweetheart is faithless to her.

Didn't Need Washing.

The Aino, an uncivilized tribe on the island of Yesso, are not at all fond of bathing. Indeed, they share the Chinese idea that it is only dirty people who need continual washing. They do not regard themselves as dirty and therefore dispense with the uncleanly habit.

"You white people must be very dirty," said an Aino to a traveler as the latter was preparing to take a plunge into a limpid river, "as you tell me you bathe in the river every day."

"And what about yourself?" was the question in turn.

"Oh," replied he, with an air of contempt, "I am very clean and have never needed washing!"

A Shrewd Preacher.

A preacher advocating the support of a charitable object prefaced the circulation of the boxes with this address:

"From the great sympathy I have witnessed in your countenances there is only one thing I am afraid of—that some of you may feel inclined to give too much. Now, it is my duty to inform you that justice should always be a prior virtue to generosity; therefore I wish to have it thoroughly understood that no person will think of putting anything into the box who cannot pay his debts."

The result was an overflowing collection.—London Tit-Bits.

According to the Code.

The commanding officer had surprised the young lieutenant and his daughter trying to occupy the same chair. The lieutenant sprang to his feet and saluted.

"Sir," he said, "I have the honor to report an engagement at close quarters, in which I have been entirely victorious. It now merely remains for you to give your sanction to the terms of surrender."

A Waste of Money.

"But," expostulated Jones, "if you'd only pay me what you owe me I could pay Smith what I owe him."

"I know it," said Robinson. "But Smith wouldn't pay me what he owes me. You and I would merely impoverish ourselves to enrich Smith."—Town Topics.

Ominous.

"Is the boss going to give you the raise you asked for?"

"Well—er—I'm afraid to say. I told him I thought my pay should be commensurate with the amount of work I do, and he promptly agreed with me."—Philadelphia Press.

They Loved Each Other So.

Ethel (to Rose, who has just told her a funny story)—But, my dear, that's an awfully old joke. Rose—Is it really, dear? Well, of course you ought to know.—New York Telegram.

Back Pay.

"What did he get $500 back pension for?"

"Why, he was shot between the shoulder blades."—Yonkers Herald.

THE USE OF CHARMS.

Peculiar Amulet Which Is Common Among the Koreans.

The people of all nations are superstitious, and a belief in charms and amulets prevails among people of every rank and grade, educated or ignorant, refined or vicious. When a man declares, "I have no superstition," continue the subject, and in a few minutes he will state, "While I am not superstitious, yet I must say I always did believe," etc., demonstrating that he is about as superstitious as the average of mankind. Charms and amulets are made of almost everything, from a repulsive collection of human fingers, human bones, frogs, toads, snakes, pieces of glass, stone, iron, dried blood, bottles of water, etc., to elegant and artistic combinations of gold and precious stones. For many centuries scraps of paper with quotations from the Bible, from the Koran and from the Vedas or combinations of letters or figures containing some mystic significance have been used all over the world.

The abracadabra of the ancients, the letters being repeated and placed in the form of a triangle, was in general use. Written on a sheet of paper, folded up and worn on the person, it was supposed to keep off fevers and bring good luck to the wearer. The Koreans have a most peculiar form of this kind of charm, consisting of the figures 1 to 9 inclusive placed in the form of a square, thus:

6	1	8
7	5	3
2	9	4

The sum of the figures in each vertical, horizontal or diagonal row, eight rows in all, is fifteen. It is supposed to be very efficacious in promoting health, happiness and prosperity and warding off evil influences. On rising in the morning these figures are written on a piece of paper, rolled up in a pellet and thrown away or rolled in a piece of bread and fed to the fishes, which is held to be the most efficacious way.

A highly educated Korean gentleman said that this form of charm is used among all classes of people in his native land. Speaking of it, he said: "My father, an educated, well informed gentleman, laughed at all superstitions, yet he would every morning write down the figures in the prescribed form on a piece of paper, roll it in a pellet, cover it with bread and feed it to the goldfish. He said that, while he did not believe in such nonsense, it always made him feel better."—Washington Post.

Getting a Good Start.

"Miss Sophie," beloved benefactress of half the poor of New Orleans, sat at her desk writing when an elderly woman who had made many previous demands upon her was ushered in.

"Oh, Miss Sophie," she said breathlessly, "I want to borrow a dollar, please, right away."

"What do you need the money for, Ermagarde?"

"Well, now, you see, I'm going to get married, and I need it for the license."

"But if the man you are to marry cannot pay for the license how is he going to support you?"

"That's just what I want to explain to you, Miss Sophie. You see, tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and we are coming to your free dinner. Then you always give us something to take home, and in the evening the King's Daughters are going to have a basket distribution, and we shall each get one. That will keep us a week easily, and by that time we'll be on our feet."

Chaucer's Face In a Stone.

In the geological branch of the British museum the visitor is shown a wonderful specimen of natural imitation in a small "ribbon jasper." This stone, the material of which is not unlike that of other banded agates, has upon its surface a perfect miniature portrait of the poet Chaucer. Every detail is startlingly correct. There are the white face, the pouting lips, the broad, low forehead and even the whites of the slightly upturned eyes. The attendants say that it is utterly impossible to convince even some of the educated visitors that it is not an artificial production.

Rhymes For Timbuktu.

Timbuktu is chiefly interesting as the subject of verses submitted for a prize offered many years ago by Punch for rhymes to that curious name. One of the verses was:

If I were a cassowary
On the plains of Timbuktu,
I would eat a missionary,
Skin and bones and hymn book too.

Another, with a more perfect rhyme, ran thus:

As I was hunting on the plains,
All on the plains of Timbuktu,
A buck was all I got for my pains,
And he was a slim buck too.

Quick Dispatch.

A bill was once stuck on the shop window of a tradesman in the Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, setting forth that "these premises are temporarily closed owing to the marriage of the proprietor; to be reopened in twenty minutes."

The Real Reason.

"How did that prima donna come to lose her voice?"

"Well," answered the impresario, "some people say she sang too much, but my personal opinion is that she lost it arguing about salary."—Washington Star.

There are few wild beasts more to be dreaded than a talking man having nothing to say.—Swift.

Cowards die many times before their death.—Shakespeare.

Killing His First Man.

The killing of a brother man, even in battle, is a painful thing to remember. A soldier of the late war thus vividly describes his first experience:

"My first man I saw but twenty seconds, but I shall remember him for ever. I was standing by my gun when a Confederate infantry soldier rushed up.

"I whipped out my revolver and took him through the breast. He tossed up his arms, gave me the strangest look in the world, and fell forward upon his face. He had blue eyes, brown curling hair, a dark mustache, and a handsome face.

"I thought the instant I fired that I should have loved that man if I had known him. I tell you this war is terrible business."—Youth's Companion.

All persons who have promised to contribute to the Relief fund are kindly requested to send the money in at once so we can turn it over to the parties, who are in need of it. Any others wishing to contribute will please give us their contributions at once.

Read the West Virginian. It has the latest news.

Keep Sweet.

Thro' the Dreams with their beautiful faces
Show dim thro' Reality's tears,
As Labor and Pain take their places,
Remember them still thro' the years!

Thro' your heart, which the world cannot harden,
Be full of tears up to flood mark,
Smith straight thro' the day, God will pardon
If you cry to yourself in the dark!
—Barnet Tolbridge.